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Studentâ€™s corner: How to study effectively for prep tests?

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So youâ€™ve been sitting with your Calculus book for a couple of hours, and the formulae refuse to reside in your memory. You decide to take a break for 15 minutes and switch on your favorite music channel. An hour later when you return to your desk, your mind seems oddly blank. Panic settles in- youâ€™ve got four hours to prepare for tomorrowâ€™s finals. And now youâ€™re here praying to whateve believe in that by some miracle youâ€™ll be able to stuff that exaggeratingly bloated book into your memory. No, Iâ€™m no psychic. Iâ€™m a traumatized student too and Iâ€™ve got some good and bad ne you.

Bad news is: Forget about that test. You cannot ace Calculus within a couple of hours of prep unless youâ€™re a prodigy in which case you wouldnâ€™t be here. You can only hope to pass it. Provided you can at least identify the integral symbol as what it is and not an elongated â€˜Sâ€™.

Good news is: I can help you with your next test! Iâ€™m not talking about tutoring, stupid. I can offer you some helpful tips on how to study better, faster and store the data for longer.

Unoriginal or not, time management is the only way to survive high school or college. Make a schedule. I hate to say this, but clearing entrance exams like SATâ€™s require regular effort. Start from day one. You donâ€™t have to stay ahead of your class, but you must revise each dayâ€™s lesson the same day. Your workload will reduce magically. Maintain a registry to jot down all the things youâ€™ve learned that day. This way, youâ€™re aware of how much youâ€™ve progressed.

Keep track of your assignments in a daily planner or a calendar. And finish them before the deadline. Working on assignments the night before to the early hours of the morning is not cool. You lose much needed sleep and it usually gets in the way of your learning time. Once you get to college, erase the word procrastination (and anything related to it) from your memory. Unless youâ€™re positively sure you can handle the pressure, donâ€™t get too lazy. Youâ€™ll be desperately pleading for help, drowning in a Tsunami of assignments and re-tests.

Whatâ€™s your ideal study environment? The library is the best learning environment. You have plenty of resources to clear your doubts and it is free from potential distractions. Or if you donâ€™t want to get out of your room, make sure everything you need is available near your desk. Apart from your cell phone.

Feeling restless and distracted? Create short study blocks. Donâ€™t spend long hours glaring at the book, cursing its existence. When everything seems to go over your head, take short breaks in between. Standard definition of short is 15 minutes. Never exceed that.

If youâ€™re mind is plagued by a boundless stream of thoughts, meditate. Not the yoga kind. Tack a piece of paper note on the wall, or your disk with a dot, letter or some symbol on it. Whenever you feel overly distracted, shut your books and concentrate on that symbol. Try to empty your mind. Once youâ€™re calm, start reading. Gradually, staring at that piece of paper, youâ€™ll get distracted less and less.

Donâ€™t just stick to the prescribed reading material. Explore the Internet; find out books from different authors in various online libraries. Use resources like MITâ€™s OCW. Itâ€™s got plenty of lectures in the video, text and audio format from senior faculty. Download as many books or videos you can using affordable and fast Internet connections like FiOS Internet and store them in your hard disk. Note down the interesting points. You can use them in your next assignment.

Last but not the least, reward yourself for every successful task youâ€™ve completed. It can be an extra 10 minutes on the play station, a second helping of your favorite munchies or a date night out. It will keep you motivated and youâ€™ll have something to look forward to after the hard work.

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Heather is a cheery, enthusiastic college student. As an education major, she likes to research about the best suited learning methods. She is interested in cooking, pottery, creative visualization, and like all other teenagers surfs the Internet on her laptop connected to a FiOS Internet

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